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ABSTRACT

A survey of California schools elicited 54 inservice teacher education programs to help teachers identify at-risk students and develop effective instructional strategies to meet their needs. Five programs were selected as models for statewide replication. Each model program met at least four of the following criteria: (1) a comprehensive, whole-school approach; (2) a challenging and engaging core curriculum; (3) successful at-risk strategies; (4) equity issues understood and applied as an integral part of the curriculum; (5) entire staff responsibility for employing effective strategies for at-risk students; (6) staff development for both new and continuing teachers; and (7) research-based strategies. The following programs are described: (1) Resources for Students at Risk (Irvine Unified School District); (2) New Teacher Support Project (Long Beach Unified School District); (3) Changing the Attitudes of At-Risk Students (Monterey Unified School District); (4) Principal's Academic and Behavior Review Board (Mission San Jose High School, Fremont); and (5) Improve the Instructional Program for At-Risk Youths (Walker Junior High School, Anaheim). Recommendations for dropout prevention programs are suggested. A list of 29 references and a letter to County Superintendents of Schools soliciting programs for review are appended. (FMW)

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STARS

STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS OF AT-RISK STUDENTS

CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION • SACRAMENTO, 1990

STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS OF AT-RISK STUDENTS

Prepared under the direction of
Intersegmental Relations Division
California State Department of Education

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PREFACE

In 1988 the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) issued a request for proposals to state educational agencies that wished to develop programs to strengthen the teaching profession. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation would provide grant funds through the CCSSO to support such projects, particularly those targeting teachers of students at risk of school failure. The California State Department of Education was one of 14 state agencies selected to receive a grant.

During the past ten years, the California State Department of Education has become increasingly involved in efforts in two major areas—improving the quality of California's teaching force and developing programs to address the needs of students who are at risk of school failure. The CCSSO/Mellon grant provided a unique opportunity to the Department to combine these efforts to (1) identify schools in California that have developed exemplary strategies aimed at identifying at-risk students or providing appropriate intervention; and (2) instruct new teachers of such students throughout the state to use the successful strategies.

During a survey of successful programs in California, we became aware that several good methods have been developed to identify at-risk students. However, there are very few schools or districts that have implemented successful instructional strategies for at-risk students or staff development for new teachers assigned to teach at-risk students. Through careful analysis of the programs we surveyed, we were able to identify characteristics of successful programs. A discussion of these characteristics is included in this publication.

The Project STARS (Strategies for Teachers of At-Risk Students) publication will be used throughout California to help new and experienced teachers adopt appropriate methods for the identification and instruction of at-risk students. The California Department of Education is funding 20 school districts, colleges, and universities for the purpose of supporting new teachers and assessing their competencies (under the California New Teacher Project and the New Teacher Retention in Inner City Schools Project). It is hoped that this publication will assist districts and institutions of higher education in these projects and others to prepare teachers to instruct California's at-risk students successfully.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The experiences of at-risk students continue to receive serious attention from policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. Current literature is beginning to reveal the magnitude of the dropout problem, especially for minority and poor students. Traditionally, interest and research have focused on sociological and demographic characteristics associated with at-risk students. By examining a set of characteristics common to students who leave school, the literature has provided a clear picture of who drops out and why. However, because of an excessive focus on the specific symptoms and consequences of dropping out of school, the development of cohesive, integrated instructional strategies and approaches has been ignored.

Project Strategies for Teachers of At-Risk Students (STARS) has gathered data about instructional practices and approaches that work successfully with at-risk students. To locate the successful strategies, Project STARS developed a survey and distributed it to schools, school districts, county superintendents of schools, colleges, and universities. The survey was intended to identify schools where thoughtful, comprehensive teacher preparation programs and resultant instructional strategies appeared to reduce the number of young people who left the system. Programs submitted in response to the Project STARS survey were analyzed in light of a set of assumptions derived from selected research on at-risk students. Assumptions which guided the search for model strategies and approaches included the following:

1. At-risk students benefit from a comprehensive whole-school approach to the problem of dropping out and are not isolated from their more advantaged peers by participation in a separate program.
2. At-risk students participate in a core curriculum that is both challenging and engaging and is shared by all students.
3. The core curriculum is embedded with flexible instructional strategies that work successfully with at-risk students.
4. Equity issues are understood and applied as an integral part of the delivery of the curriculum.
5. The whole staff, not just special project staff, is responsible for employing effective strategies for at-risk students.
6. Staff development focusing on strategies that deal effectively with at-risk students is provided for continuing and new teachers.
7. At-risk research is used as a base upon which strategies are built.

Results of the Survey

Fifty-four proposals were reviewed and placed in the following categories according to the assumptions listed previously. The model programs supported at least four of the assumptions, and the other programs supported three or fewer assumptions.

1. *Model programs*. The approach to dealing with at-risk students was institutionalized and implemented on a schoolwide basis. The core curriculum, the focus of the program, was embedded with successful at-risk strategies. Gender equity issues were understood, but only one program mentioned minority equity issues. In 80 percent of the programs, the whole

staff was involved in implementation and staff development that used research as the basis for developing the program.

2. *Finalists*. Only 40 percent of this group viewed instruction for at-risk students as a schoolwide issue, considered the core curriculum as the focus of the program, and provided the necessary staff development. Only 20 percent of the projects held the whole staff accountable, but 100 percent of the projects in this group stated that the programs were based on at-risk research.
3. *Programs not recommended for a visit*. An average of 20 percent viewed the instruction for at-risk students as a schoolwide issue, and 35 percent used the core curriculum as the focus of the program. Only 25 percent viewed at-risk students as the responsibility of the whole staff, and 4 percent of the programs provided staff development.
4. *Programs disqualified for inappropriate content*. As a group, fewer than 20 percent addressed any of the criteria.

Conclusions of the Survey

The conclusions of this survey are based on the findings as reported previously:

1. Few schools developed a schoolwide approach to the development and implementation of instructional strategies and approaches for at-risk students. Although the evidence suggests that development of instructional strategies and approaches for at-risk students should be considered as a schoolwide concern, very few schools were moving in that direction. Of those surveyed, most (75 percent) still maintained separate safety net programs for at-risk students.
2. Most instruction for at-risk students took place outside of a core curriculum. In nearly one-third of the schools surveyed, student success in a core curriculum was not reported to be the focus of the at-risk program. At-risk students often received a separate, less challenging curriculum.
3. Instead of using varying instructional methodology to deliver the core curriculum to identified at-risk students, schools often replaced the common core of learning with a separate and unequal curriculum. Of those schools surveyed, only 25 percent reported that varied instruction practices were used to deliver the core curriculum. Activities associated with support services appeared to take the place of learning activities derived from the core curriculum.
4. Information about gender and minority issues was seldom applied to the design and delivery of the instructional program. At-risk students maintained a disproportionately low socioeconomic status, and a high percentage were minorities and female. Few of the programs submitted (11 percent) applied issues of race/cultural equity to the development of instruction strategies and approaches. Thirty-seven percent of the projects included sex equity as an integral part of the instructional program.
5. In schools where at-risk students constituted the majority of the student population, staff generally viewed the delivery of the instructional program to at-risk students as the responsibility of specialist staff. Even among the programs selected as models, only 80 percent reported that the whole staff was involved with the development and implementation of instructional strategies for at-risk students. It appeared that staff members view issues associated with at-risk youth as isolated problems, even when the majority of the students at the school are affected.

6. There appeared to be a correlation of comprehensive staff development with high quality in the at-risk program. Eighty percent of the model programs and 40 percent of the finalists had staff development programs for continuing and new teachers, and only an average of 5 percent of the other programs had such programs.
7. Although almost all persons surveyed indicated an awareness of the current literature available on students who are at risk of dropping out of school, few used the research to frame the direction of their programs. Very few classroom programs were based on knowledge of what works for at-risk students.

These results may serve to encourage educators to examine structural elements which can be modified to provide a higher quality of life for students. Understanding why students drop out is important in developing effective instructional strategies. However, by focusing on the specific symptoms of dropping out of school and emphasizing associated consequences, the majority of those surveyed had neglected to develop a cohesive, integrated program that features basic assumptions derived from current research and successful practice.

Recommendations

In view of the findings and conclusions presented, the following recommendations are made:

1. Strategies for working successfully with students at risk of dropping out of school should be developed with a schoolwide perspective. At-risk students should not be separated from their peers by being placed in a different curriculum or series of safety-net programs.
2. The core curriculum should be imparted through a variety of instructional strategies directed to the ways in which individual students learn. How students are taught should vary according to what works. However, the concepts of the core curriculum should remain constant for all students. The collection and analysis of data should constitute an integral part of the design of these strategies and approaches.
3. Equity issues should be known and applied to the design of the instructional program.
4. All staff members, regardless of the subject-matter areas to which they are assigned, should be held responsible for employing effective instructional strategies with at-risk students. The responsibility for the academic success for these students should be shared by all.
5. Staff development that focuses on strategies and approaches for working with at-risk students should be provided for continuing and new teachers. The staff development plan should be developed in concert with the teachers of at-risk students and should incorporate effective adult pedagogy. Research on at-risk students should be used as a base on which the staff development plan is built.

Summary of the Survey

Increasing amounts of information support the conclusion that the dropout problem is a universal concern involving more than a few students confined to urban areas. Because an increasing portion of the student population is affected,

education professionals should adapt teaching practices and approaches to meet the changing needs of the student body. At-risk students should not be isolated because they receive instruction apart from the core curriculum, nor should they be exposed to few instructional strategies geared to their needs. Particular care should be given to the instructional process, and policies should ensure that at-risk students are the responsibility of all school staff. For those students academic success rests with more than a few in-school specialists or community-based organizations.

INTRODUCTION

The experiences of at-risk students continue to receive serious attention from policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. The large amount of current literature about school dropouts and at-risk students recognizes the magnitude of the problem, especially for minority and economically disadvantaged students. From this literature a clear picture of who drops out and why can be drawn by examining a set of characteristics common to those students who leave school. However, because the literature has focused so extensively on the specific symptoms of dropping out of school and the associated consequences, the development of cohesive, integrated, instructional strategies and approaches appears to have been overlooked.

Traditionally, interest and research have focused on characteristics associated with at-risk students. More recently, researchers, educators, and policymakers have begun to examine successful instructional practices and approaches for at-risk students. Increasing amounts of information support the conclusion that the dropout problem is significant and is not limited to a few students in urban areas. Research also shows that for an increasing portion of the student population, it appears likely that education was not meeting the changing needs of the student body.

The task of bringing the successful instructional strategies to light was the mission of Project STARS. The intent of the project was to encourage new teachers to make extended use of those strategies and approaches likely to make a significant difference in the schooling of at-risk students.

This publication examines proposals submitted in response to Project STARS' search for model practices and approaches to learning for at-risk students. It begins its analysis with a list of assumptions made on the Request for Proposal that provides a framework for examining the proposals. The following assumptions were made regarding effective programs for at-risk students:

1. At-risk students benefit from a whole-school approach to the problem of dropping out of school. They are not isolated from their more advantaged peers by participation in a separate program.
2. At-risk students participate in a challenging and engaging core curriculum that is shared by all students.
3. The core curriculum is embedded with successful at-risk strategies and approaches. These at-risk strategies address the lives of the students themselves and vary according to what is most effective with each individual. The concepts of the core curriculum, however, remain constant and provide the base upon which the instructional program is built.
4. Equity issues are understood and applied as an integral part of the delivery of the instructional program.
5. The whole staff is responsible for employing effective strategies for at-risk students. Responsibility for the academic success of these students is not relegated to special project staff but is shared by the staff as a whole.
6. Staff development which focuses on strategies to deal effectively with at-risk students is provided for continuing and new teachers. A high degree of pedagogical expertise is expected of all teachers.
7. At-risk research is used as a base upon which strategies are built. The tasks of collecting and analyzing data are critical to the design of an effective instructional program.

These assumptions have been derived from the large body of research now available on at-risk students. The selected references included provide a list of

suggested readings that may help those who want to establish schoolwide approaches to the dropout problem. The results of the Project STARS survey, however, imply that although research may provide a sound base, the schools and districts involved in any improvement effort must give as much time to action as to reflection.

The schools and districts featured in the study have gone beyond reflection and are acting on some basic assumptions of their own. Although specific strategies and approaches may vary, the programs are similar in several ways, including an adherence to most of the assumptions noted previously.

PROJECT STARS SURVEY

The Project STARS survey was administered by the Intersegmental Relations Division, California State Department of Education, which offered small grants to schools, school districts, offices of county superintendents of schools, colleges, and universities. Respondents were asked to submit program descriptions of successful teaching practices and approaches that new teachers could use to identify and work with students at risk of dropping out of school. Selected program descriptions were to be featured in a publication to be titled *Strategies for Teachers of At-Risk Students*. An award of $250 was to be made to the source of the program to help defray the cost of completing the survey.

Approximately 3,500 requests for proposals (RFPs) were sent to California's 1,034 school districts. A return rate of 10 percent was expected. Although responses came from a cross-section of schools and districts—urban, rural, and suburban—the rate of return for the survey was disappointing. Only 54 descriptions were received. Of that number, a few were eliminated because of inappropriate content. Most were sent on to be read by a panel of experts on at-risk youths.

The low rate of return for the Project STARS survey could be attributed to one or more reasons: (1) too little incentive ($250 plus public recognition of the program); (2) failure of the potential respondents to view the survey as worthwhile because of their busy schedules; (3) failure to reach key contributors with the survey application; and (4) confusion regarding the purpose of the survey. Because of these or other reasons, it is likely that some deserving programs have been omitted from this publication. The STARS model programs should be viewed as a *sample* of good strategies rather than a comprehensive overview of at-risk programs or an indictment of too little attention paid to the program.

SURVEY FRAMEWORK

For the establishment of a consistent framework for the survey, grant applicants were asked to submit program descriptions that centered on (1) identifying students at risk; (2) addressing the needs of individual at-risk students; and (3) improving the quality of the instructional program throughout the school.

1. *Identifying at-risk students.* Within this category applicants could describe successful instructional practices and approaches that recognize early on those conditions that contribute to the dropout syndrome. Examples of those conditions include:
   a. Low scores on achievement tests
   b. Repetition of a grade
   c. Overage for the grade
   d. Infrequent participation in extracurricular activities
   e. Poor attendance
   f. Discipline problems
   g. Conflict with the demands of work
   h. Difficulty in getting along with the teacher
   i. Pregnancy or marriage
   j. Parenthood

2. *Addressing individual student needs.* Within this category, applicants were to describe classroom or schoolwide adaptations to the needs of individual students or the shared needs of groups of students. These adaptations can be divided into two broad areas:
   a. Respondents who elected to address the needs of individual students were asked to describe teaching practices and approaches that could help students achieve the following:
      (1) Improved study habits
      (2) Sharpened test-taking skills
      (3) Effective problem-solving skills
      (4) Efficient time management
   b. Classroom adaptation designed to:
      (1) Tie core knowledge and skills to alternative learning.
      (2) Vary teaching styles to accommodate levels of learning, interest, and ability.
      (3) Establish student study teams.
      (4) Use collaborative learning techniques.

3. *Improving the instructional program throughout the school.* This section sought ways in which teachers could become familiar with and participate in the development and delivery of a high-quality curriculum. Components to be addressed in this area included:
   a. Developing and delivering a high-quality core curriculum that is challenging, interesting, and relevant to at-risk students
   b. Increasing teacher skills and knowledge in instructional methodology
   c. Developing positive teacher attitudes toward at-risk students
   d. Encouraging parental monitoring of student progress

The Request For Proposal that was sent to California school districts can be found in the Appendix.

ASSUMPTIONS BASED ON RESEARCH

By focusing on the specific symptoms of at-risk student behavior and emphasizing its consequences, the education community has often neglected the essential strategies and approaches needed to implement an instructional program effectively. The analysis of the Project STARS proposals begins with a list of assumptions that were made regarding implementation of effective instructional programs for at-risk students.

It is important to qualify this list by pointing out that research in this area continues to refine an understanding of what instructional strategies work with at-risk students. The following list of assumptions and accompanying brief summary of the supporting research serve as a frame of reference for the Project STARS survey:

1. *Students at risk benefit from a comprehensive or whole-school approach to the problem of dropping out of school.* These students should not be separated from their more advantaged peers by having to participate in an isolated program.
   a. Research consistently confirms that unsuccessful academic experiences, poor classroom performance, and failing grades are correlated with the dropout rate.[1] Further, much of the literature on dropout prevention suggests that ability grouping, although beneficial for some students, is harmful for remedial students.[2] Pull-out or in-class programs appear to make little lasting difference in student achievement.[3] Therefore, programs for at-risk students may be appropriately considered as an institutional concern about the way in which the core curriculum is delivered to all students. At-risk issues should be considered in the *comprehensive* development and delivery of the core curriculum, not as "add-ons."[4]
   b. The curriculum provided to the at-risk students should be the same as the one presented to their more advantaged peers. This curriculum has a core. It is a basic curriculum for all students and expands their vision. It is appropriate for every student, not just the college-bound.[5]
2. *At-risk students participate in a core curriculum that is challenging and engaging and is shared by all students.* Students who are at risk of dropping out of school do need remedial instruction but must be taught the core curriculum.[6] Often, students who are at risk participate in a weak and substandard curriculum. "[The remedial] curriculum instead offers students a core of skills and information designed to prepare them for only the most basic level of participation in society."[7] At-risk students can be locked into a remedial curriculum that actually widens the gap between them and their classmates.[8] This curriculum, lacking in intrinsic vitality, may in fact slow progress and reinforce the low expectations of the students it is supposed to serve.[9] This problem, referred to as *educational supplanting*, can be addressed by introducing at-risk programs into the core curriculum.[10] Further, by having access to the core curriculum, students are likely to avoid the dry, dull "skill-and-drill" exercises that substitute for more challenging assignments with more interesting applications. How that curriculum is taught may, however, be dramatically altered.[11]

NOTE: References can be found on page 30.

3. *The core curriculum is embedded with successful at-risk strategies.*

   a. Current research on learning styles and related pedagogy provide a substantive argument for varying instructional strategy to ensure students' understanding of core concepts. "Most children can master the same content; how they master it is determined by their individual styles."[12] It appears important, then, that teachers possess a variety of teaching styles that will increase their ability to adapt curricula not only to different student achievement levels in the same classroom but to different learning styles among the students as well.[13] The concepts of the core curriculum, however, must remain constant and provide the base upon which the instructional program is built.

   b. The curricula (English–language arts, history–social science, mathematics, science, and visual and performing arts) are likely to be strengthened if pedagogy remains flexible.[14] Instructors can distinguish the reason for school failure and adjust the instructional methodology without diminishing or making substitutions in the core curriculum. The public school curriculum and associated strategies should be infused with effective pedagogy by teachers and other professionals and should not be made so "teacher proof" or rigidly standard or uniformly paced that educators are demoted to being mere implementers.[15]

4. *Equity issues are understood and applied as an integral part of the delivery of the instructional program.*

   a. In 20 years 40 percent of the work force in California will consist of minorities.[16] Studies show that racial and cultural minorities have significantly higher dropout rates than their white counterparts. "Cultural support systems are an urgent requirement in many instances, particularly among limited-English-proficient students.[17] Girls especially are "shortchanged in the critical currency of classroom instruction."[18] Males are asked more questions, are given more precise feedback, and have more time to respond to questions. One way to guard against this type of situation is to inaugurate creative instructional approaches that respond to the equity issues inherent in the changing student population. Further, issues of race, gender, social class, disability, and language should be included in the delivery of the core curriculum and should not be treated as peripheral concerns.

   b. Over the past two decades, research has revealed that minority students learn best when instruction and teaching are sensitive to students' linguistic, social, and cultural knowledge. More recently, this research has investigated the acquisition of cognitive skills and literacy as a function of those factors (cultural congruence).

5. *The whole staff is responsible for employing effective strategies for at-risk students.*

   a. Responsibility for the academic success of these students is not relegated to special project staff but is shared by the staff as a whole. The evidence suggesting that the dropout problem is a problem for the whole school continues to mount. "Tracking, pull-out programs, [and] reliance on paraprofessionals to monitor remedial learning serve as barriers rather than facilitators to improving the curriculum of literacy for youngsters at risk."[19]

b. To overcome the relatively recent tradition of relegating at-risk students to a portion of the instructional program, each school staff member must consider the role he or she must play in encouraging the academic success of these students. The organization of the school should reflect the common goal of academic success for all students, including those who are at risk of dropping out. "School effectiveness research reveals that . . . low-achieving students benefit greatly from going to effective schools. . . . If we enhance school effectiveness at the same time we are addressing the needs of eligible students, every student will benefit from going to a better school."[20]

6. *Staff development focusing on strategies to deal effectively with at-risk students is provided for continuing and new teachers.*

   a. A high degree of pedagogical expertise is expected of all teachers. Researchers have written persuasively about the persistence of a limited pedagogical repertoire among teachers,[21] yet it is widely recognized that "good decisions can only be made when decision makers possess useful information on alternatives, their consequences, and requirements for implementation."[22] It seems wise, then, to provide staff development opportunities to continuing and new teachers on strategies and approaches effective in meeting the needs of at-risk students. Staff development increases the probability that staff will employ a repertoire of pedagogical skills to reach diverse students.

   b. Preservice education and training should provide teachers and administrators with the skills needed to build effective programs for today's student population. However, since change is constant and the dropout rate critical, continuing and new teachers need staff development on instructional strategies that deal effectively with at-risk students.

7. *At-risk research is used as base upon which strategies are built.* The collection of data and the capacity for its analysis are evident. Like staff development opportunities, increased knowledge of professional literature and increased control over the knowledge base can build feelings of competence that can benefit students in the classroom.[23] In the model programs examined, at-risk research is used effectively as the base upon which strategies are built in many successful programs. Collection of data and its accompanying analysis are important features of this applied research. Although schools alone may not be able to solve the dropout problem, schools can heed the research and review policies and practices that create negative experiences—those that can push at-risk students to the brink of dropping out.

SELECTION PROCEDURES AND SURVEY RESULTS

A panel of education leaders—experts in the field of at-risk students and representatives of the K–12 system and institutions of higher education—read and discussed each survey response. The panel evaluated each program description according to criteria derived from the RFP. Panel members selected ten proposals from the original group as finalists. They notified the finalists and made on-site visits to view the programs in action. Of the ten sites visited, five schools were awarded grants on the basis of a review of the information collected during the visits.

The panel expected to identify a significantly larger group of finalists. Because there was a lack of alignment of programs with Project STARS assumptions and criteria, fewer finalists were selected than anticipated. Members of the panel reasoned that the selection of a small number of excellent programs was preferable to the selection of a large number of average programs.

The survey results, based on the assumptions cited in the previous sections, revealed that strategies for teaching at-risk youth were approached from two distinctly different perspectives: those that adhered to current research and were identified as exemplary and those that appeared to be grounded in old paradigms and did not compete successfully. The survey was primarily concerned with strategies and approaches that did work. However, the review panel became equally fascinated with beliefs and practices common among education professionals, that may actually impede the progress of at-risk students.

A total of 54 proposals were reviewed and divided into four groups: Model Programs (5); Finalists (5); Programs Not Recommended for a Visit (26); and Programs Disqualified as Inappropriate (19).

The following analysis of the survey results describe what appears to work well for at-risk students as well as strategies and approaches that are less effective:

1. *Model Programs*. These programs included at least the following four of the six assumptions: (a) the approach to dealing with at-risk students was institutionalized and implemented on a schoolwide basis; (b) success in the core curriculum was viewed as the focus of the program; (c) the core curriculum was embedded with successful at-risk strategies; and (d) equity issues were understood and applied regarding gender differences. Only one program mentioned minority equity issues. In four of the five programs in this category (80 percent), the whole staff was involved in implementing the strategies and approaches; and at-risk research was used as the basis for developing the program. Staff development for continuing and new teachers was provided in four of the five model programs.
2. *Finalists*. A sharp decline in scores and inconsistent scoring characterized this group. Only 40 percent (2) of the finalists viewed instruction for at-risk students as a schoolwide issue, considered the core curriculum as the focus of the program, or provided the necessary staff development. At-risk strategies were embedded in the core curriculum in 60 percent (3) of these programs, but only 20 percent (1) held the whole staff accountable. Surprisingly, all of the finalists indicated that they based their programs on at-risk research.
3. *Programs Not Recommended for a Visit*. The decline of the scores was further confirmed in the analysis of this group. Only 20 percent viewed instruction for at-risk students as a schoolwide issue. The core curriculum was used as the focus of the program in 35 percent of the programs. The

same percentage embedded the core curriculum with at-risk strategies and considered at-risk students the responsibility of the whole staff. Not one program addressed minority equity issues. However, half of the programs used at-risk literature as the basis for the development of the program, and 40 percent provided staff development for continuing or new teachers.

4. *Programs Disqualified as Inappropriate*. The decline in scoring was consistently low in this group. No more than 20 percent of the programs addressed any of the assumptions. The percentages and areas of concern are as follows: 20 percent, research results; 15 percent, instructional and curriculum issues and involvement of more than a few staff; 12 percent, at-risk literature; and 6 percent, equity issues and staff development.

An increasing amount of evidence suggests that the dropout problem affects more than a few students within a school. However, few of the projects surveyed viewed the problem as schoolwide. Most schools and districts treated at-risk practices as safety-net or add-on programs.

The selected model programs, on the other hand, based their instructional program on the belief that strategies and approaches for at-risk students should be well integrated throughout the entire curriculum. Further, schools which submitted these programs viewed them as an institutional concern affecting the delivery of the core curriculum to all students.

All of the model programs perceived student success in the core curriculum as the focus of the program, but only 25 percent of the other programs reported recognition of this criterion. In selected model programs the at-risk students were expected to achieve success in the same core curriculum as their more advantaged peers. The curriculum was not reduced, nor was a set of lower-level concepts substituted. Most other programs surveyed did not address a correlation between perceived reasons for students dropping out and the curriculum employed. In less competitive programs there were often separate curricula for at-risk students which were regarded by staff as appropriately challenging. Expectations were lower for these students than for students in the regular programs, and the curriculum was modified to reflect those expectations.

In the model programs the core curriculum is embedded with successful at-risk strategies. Instructional methodology has been adapted to suit the students' strengths and learning styles, although the concept of the core curriculum has remained constant. Model program students are presented with a rich curriculum in which they actively engage in higher-level activities featuring problem solving rather than skill-and-drill exercises. In other programs, however, students were given a series of safety-net strategies.

Only 11 percent of all the programs discussed racial equity as an integral part of the core curriculum, although 37 percent considered sex equity as integral. However, the equity issues of cultural diversity and gender differences were recognized and used to shape a more viable instructional program in programs selected as models. Because the curriculum was common to all students, equity concerns were well known by staff, and this knowledge helped to shape student-teacher interactions.

Many good ideas for dealing with at-risk students were submitted by individual staff members. However, most of the staffs surveyed viewed the at-risk issue as an isolated problem of a few, even when the majority of students were affected. Results indicated that the impact of good practices declines when instruction is viewed as an isolated activity involving only one or two staff members. In selected model programs, dealing with the at-risk population was viewed as the responsibility of all staff members at the school, not just those designated as the "dropout teachers."

A strong base of support was available for teachers and other support staff in the model programs selected. Staff development was provided for new teachers as well as for those who had been in the classroom for some time. Two assumptions appeared to provide an umbrella of support for staff development:

1. New teachers may have received general pedagogical information during preservice training, but the realities of the diverse needs of students in the classroom had seldom been covered adequately.
2. Shifting demographics, especially the increase of culturally diverse students, provided a substantial challenge to even the most experienced teachers.

Fewer than half of the programs responding included a staff development component to support teachers of at-risk students. Once in the classroom, teachers appeared to be on their own to increase the skills and knowledge which would enable them to deal more effectively with at-risk students.

Surprisingly, most project staff surveyed were familiar with the current literature on at-risk students. Most of these staff members knew the characteristics associated with dropping out of school. However, the ways in which the current literature could be applied to development and implementation of strategies and approaches for teaching at-risk students had often been overlooked.

This recognition of educators' failure to relate research findings to instructional practices challenges us to examine strategies and approaches in the instructional program which could be modified to provide higher educational quality for students. Understanding why students drop out is important in developing effective instructional strategies. But by focusing too heavily on the specific symptoms of dropping out and overemphasizing associated consequences, most educators in this survey neglected to develop cohesive, integrated instructional strategies and approaches which would promote at-risk students' success in a common core curriculum.

RECOMMENDATIONS

An increasing number of findings supports the conclusion that the dropout problem is significant. And the findings hold not just for a few students in urban areas but for an increasing proportion of the student population. Therefore, education professionals should adapt teaching practices and approaches to meet the changing needs of the entire student body. The at-risk students should not continue to be isolated by receiving instruction apart from the core curriculum, with little exposure to individualized instructional strategies. Particular care should be given to the instructional process. Administrators should make certain that the entire school staff is committed to at-risk students and that these students' academic success is not the responsibility of only a few in-school specialists or representatives of community-based organizations.

In light of the findings and conclusions presented, the following recommendations are made regarding the development of instructional strategies and approaches for students who are at risk of dropping out of school:

1. The development of instructional strategies and approaches for working successfully with students who are at risk of dropping out of school should be considered from a schoolwide perspective. At-risk students should not be separated from their peers by a different curriculum or a series of safety-net programs.
2. The core curriculum should be transmitted to at-risk students through a variety of instructional strategies geared to the ways individual students learn. How the students are taught should vary according the criteria of effectiveness; however, the concepts of the core curriculum should remain constant for all students. The collection and analysis of data should be an integral part of the design of these strategies and approaches.
3. Equity issues should be known and integrated into the design of the instructional program.
4. The whole staff, regardless of subject matter expertise, should employ effective instructional strategies for at-risk students. The responsibility for the academic success of at-risk students should be shared by all and not be relegated to a few.
5. Staff development which focuses on strategies and approaches for working with at-risk students should be provided for both continuing and new teachers. The design of the staff development plan should include input from teachers of at-risk students and incorporate what is known to be effective adult pedagogy. At-risk research should be used as a base upon which the staff development plan is built.

PROJECT STARS MODEL PROGRAMS

The five projects describe in this section represent model approaches for advising and supporting both continuing and new teachers who work with at-risk students. Although only one project (Irvine Unified School District) has been extensively evaluated, the available evidence about the other four is positive. The project strategies vary from districtwide implementation to a team-teaching approach. All of the projects have received recognition from their local communities, and some have been recognized by the California Department of Education. Benefits derived from these projects include academic gains and improved attendance, and all received favorable comment from students and parents.

The designing of the Request for Proposal and the selecting of model programs centered on those that:

- Illustrated creative approaches to delivering services to at-risk students and would be especially attractive to new teachers
- Were replicable for a wide cross-section of the country
- Represented a cross-section of districts likely to be found in all states

As part of the effort to encourage replication, every attempt was made to document the effectiveness of each program summary. Although the programs selected were located in affluent districts, four of the districts were located in urban areas where the dropout problem is most severe.

Common Components of the Selected Projects

All the selected projects have support from both new and veteran teachers. In addition, all employ ongoing cooperative teacher/teacher and teacher/administrator activities. Each project has a well-developed system for advising and supporting new teachers. The students receive services from a well-functioning team that observes an intellectual work ethic and exhibits nonrejecting behavior that promotes positive student/school relationships.

The projects selected treat the at-risk problem as a systemic concern, not as a special project isolated from the core curriculum. This policy is implemented by restructuring the school to respond effectively to the varied educational needs of all students.

The projects adhere to the belief that program effectiveness depends on (1) implementation of a curriculum that challenges students academically while providing personal counseling by caring adults; (2) a casework system that identifies and assists potential dropouts; and (3) long-term follow-up activities. What works for at-risk students is a comprehensive, integrated approach in which each component reinforces the others.

The five projects vary widely in design, but all reflect a deep interest in abandoning school practices that continue to communicate rejection to at-risk students. Staff members are eager to review and discard policies and practices that create negative experiences and can push the students out of school. These instructers use innovative and systematic approaches to the teaching of affective skills that improve self-esteem and a sense of responsibility.

Staff members from the selected projects are careful not to manipulate statistics or trivialize the social and educational significance of the dropout problem. They

hold the view that dropout prevention efforts must be directed not only to a few troubled teenagers but to all students at risk of leaving school before graduating.

Use of Program Abstracts

Each program abstract offers insight into what should be considered for program adaptation or incorporation, in whole or in part. Two of the programs were implemented with no additional funding. Some of the programs offer training and personnel willing to travel nationally. Other programs are developing training packets, and all five programs have personnel available to help interested individuals by phone or with materials. The contact person is listed with each program description.

IRVINE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Resources for Students at Risk

Program components:

- Teacher-training component
- Identification of at-risk students by staff on a schoolwide basis
- Support services for at-risk students
- Improved instruction and school climate through district prevention program

Target:

- K–12 teachers

Costs:

- Curriculum: $65–75 per student
- Staff Training: $90 per person or $500 for on-site training
- Guidance Assistance: $2,600 (optional)

Outcomes:

- Students made significant gains in academic skills, attendance, assertiveness, self-esteem, and coping behavior.
- The three-year average dropout rate is 5.4 percent.

For more information, contact:

Nancy Richards, Guidance Resource Administrator
Irvine Unified School District
5050 Barranca Parkway
Irvine, CA 92714
(714) 552-4882

Program description:

The Irvine Unified School District's efforts to reduce its dropout rate combine three systemwide strategies that were initiated as early as 1979 under Title IV-C funding. The philosophy of the district is that all students need prevention skills and that the support of at-risk students in the classroom is the first line of defense.

Prevention skills include refusal skills, among others. These skills teach the ability to (1) ask questions; (2) name the trouble; (3) talk about the consequences; (4) suggest an alternative; and (5) leave, but leave the door open. The students learn these and other skills through role playing and class discussions.

The initial strategy is to follow procedures to identify at-risk students. The District-Level At-Risk Committee has compiled a comprehensive matrix that addresses eight academic and social deficits in at-risk students. The second strategy is to address the needs of individual students who are at risk. The district has done this through such programs as STAGES, STAR, GOAL, and PLUS. The third strategy is to improve the quality of the instructional program on a schoolwide basis.

Identification of At-Risk Students

The district has developed and implemented the following procedures to identify students at risk of dropping out of school:

- Data-base screening of all K–12 students who are at risk academically according to standardized test results and grades
- Development of education plan by study team after determining that a student's needs are not being met and that he or she needs assistance with academic or social skills required to prevent school failure and alienation
- Development of a support team at every site to review teacher referrals that identify at-risk behavior (e.g., hitting, fighting, withdrawing, or using illegal substances) or such quantitative items as declines in academic scores, increases in absences, and problems at home, as reported by members of the support team
- Development of additional screening procedures for study team as needed (e.g., substance abuse, pregnancy concerns, attendance, or discipline)

Addressing the Needs of At-Risk Students

Each Irvine school has a multidisciplinary committee of teachers, counselors, school psychologists, and guidance assistants that meets regularly to identify and monitor the progress of students who are at risk. Each identified student is assigned to a staff member on the committee. Each elementary site has the services of supervised guidance assistants for ten hours a week. Addressing the needs of identified students and providing support and encouragement evidently decrease the number of at-risk students.

Improving the Quality of the Instructional Program

The district's instructional program addresses the needs of at-risk students through model classroom programs on a schoolwide basis. The district's classroom implementation of these programs includes teachers trained to deliver ten to 20 curriculum lessons who are provided with the following special grade-level materials:

K Self-Esteem and School Adjustment (STAGES)
1 Feelings and Social Behavior (GOAL)
2 Introductions to the Reactions of Change (STAGES)
3 Responsibility and Goal Setting (GOAL)

4 Managing Stressful Changes in Childhood (STAGES)
5 Problem Solving and Decision Making (GOAL)
6 Interpersonal Communication with Peers (STAR)
7 Peer Resistance and Substance Abuse Prevention (STAR)
8 Managing Stressful Changes in Adolescence (STAGES)
10 Developing Effective Problem-solving Skills (PLUS)

Project GOAL: Guidance Opportunities for Affective Learning (K–6)

Started in 1979, this project became an exemplary Title IV-C project in California. All students are instructed in GOAL in classroom and small-group settings. Staff training is ongoing, with special care given to including new teachers. Strategies are provided to teach students skills that will increase their success in school. Training includes instruction in effective interpersonal skills, problem solving and decision making, self-control and stress management, and responsibility and goal setting.

Project STARS: Social Thinking and Reasoning (7–8) and
Project PLUS: Promoting Learning and Understanding Self (High Schools)

Needs assessments completed by intermediate and high school teachers indicated deficits in social skills for some students. These deficits make students vulnerable to dropping out, using illegal substances, or engaging in other dysfunctional behavior. Preventive skills are taught to all students through advisement, health, and life skills classes.

Project STAGES: Education for Students in Transition (K–12)

Children experiencing major life changes in their families (e.g., divorce, death, moving) represent over 50 percent of the student population. During the three to five years after a major life change, a student's school performance often declines, and at-risk behavior (e.g., dropping out, substance abuse, depression) increases. STAGES provides students with vital coping skills to use in times of crisis. This project is presented in classroom, small-group, advisement, and health settings.

Thousands of at-risk students have been assisted by these programs, including sequential lessons for every grade level which are easily implemented in classrooms. The district sponsors a training department that hires full-time trainers. The materials are also available from the district.

Replication:

These courses can be adapted by individual teachers and incorporated into history–social science, health, or other appropriate subject areas.

LONG BEACH UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

New Teacher Support Project

Program components:

- Staff training for new teachers
- Skills to work with at-risk students

- On-site teacher as resource
- Program inputs and outcomes

Target:

- New teachers with experience of one year or less

Costs:

- $900 per teacher in substitute time
- $2,000 per teacher as stipend for veteran teacher time

Outcomes:

- The holding power of the program is significant in that less than 10 percent of new teachers leave the profession or teach in other higher-income areas.

For more information, contact:

Diana Williams, New Teacher Project Director
Long Beach Unified School District
701 Locust Avenue
Long Beach, CA 90813
(213) 436-9931

Program desciption:

New teachers entering the profession are faced with a multitude of challenges. Many have not had experience with students from diverse cultures and ethnicities or nontraditional homes, students with substance-abuse problems, or members of student gangs. Nor are they familiar with the many other problems associated with teaching at-risk students.

New teacher support and training in Long Beach address the challenge of teaching at-risk students successfully as well as addressing the needs of new teachers generally. The two components of the New Teacher Support Project are staff development training and the use of a veteran teacher as an on-site resource. Through a variety of activities, both components share the goal of addressing individual student needs and improving the instructional program.

Staff Development Training

The staff development component for new teachers consists of five guided learning activities:

1. Classroom Management is an 18-hour course which introduces new teachers to the basic skills they need to successfully provide instruction to all students. Emphasis is placed on discipline with dignity, student self-esteem, individual learning and teaching styles, the use of positive reinforcement, and the importance of good tone in the classroom. All these elements relate directly to the successful instruction of at-risk students.
2. The New Teacher Seminar Course is a nine-hour course which addresses the needs of at-risk students, including cultural awareness training, an introduction to language acquisition strategies for classroom use, classroom techniques to use with limited-English-speaking students, gang and drug-abuse awareness training, and information about district resources.
3. Cultural Awareness (included in the New Teacher Seminar curriculum) introduces the new teachers to the cultural diversity of the district. Topics

covered include appropriate instructional strategies for students, cultural values and their impact on education, and the ways in which individual attitudes and experiences of teachers affected their expectations of students.

4. Techniques for Positive Parent Relationships is a one-day training class designed to give teachers the skills and confidence to build positive, cooperative, and mutually beneficial relationships with all parents.
5. Gang and Drug Abuse Awareness Training provides new teachers with an introduction to the problem faced by many at-risk students. Teachers become aware of how to identify students who have been involved or are becoming involved with drugs and/or gangs.
6. Observation of Demonstration Lessons is available to new teachers. They see what good teaching looks like in a variety of classroom settings with all types of students, including those at risk.

Veteran Teacher as an On-Site Resource

All new teachers have an on-site veteran teacher to provide information, encouragement, and support as they begin their career. The professional associate can help the new teacher identify students who are at risk, address the needs of individual students, and improve the instructional program.

This program is in the process of conducting a formal evaluation, but there has already been very good feedback from the new teachers. As Kenneth Williams, teacher at Holmes Elementary School, stated, "In preservice training I didn't learn to work with language and cultural differences. Fortunately, the Long Beach District has a program for new teachers. I have three friends who weren't as fortunate as I. Although they were dynamic just a year ago in graduate school, they are planning to leave the profession at the end of this year due to the difficult assignments, the unrealistic preservice program, and the lack of a supportive program at their schools."

Replication:

This program can be adapted by individual schools or districts and incorporated into the ongoing orientation of new teachers.

MONTEREY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Changing the Attitudes of At-Risk Students

Program components:

- Systemic approach to the teaching of affective skills
- Entire staff involvement with all new students
- Inputs and outcomes

Target:

- Teachers of at-risk youth students

Costs:

- There are no additional costs associated with this program.

Outcomes:

- The dropout rate for Seaside High School and Monterey High school, the two sending schools, is 6.6 percent and 15.4 percent, respectively.

For more information, contact:

Vicki Phillips, Principal
Monterey Unified School District
Post Office Box 1031
Monterey, CA 93940
(408) 899-7025

Program description:

Cypress Continuation High School is an alternative high school serving 150 students sixteen to eighteen years old who transfer to Cypress after experiencing a lack of success at a comprehensive high school. These students' previous academic histories usually include attendance problems, failing grades, and, very often, difficulty in following school regulations. All students are considered to be at risk.

Staff members had changed the school structure enough so that these students could succeed while at Cypress. However, the staff members determined that something in the outlook of the students needed to change so that the students could succeed anywhere. Consequently, a one-week, 15-session course was developed. It was to be taught by the entire staff to all new students. The staff was divided into teams of two, and each team selected a topic and was given three 40-minute sessions to teach the topic.

The overall message of the course is: "You are unique! Self-esteem comes from being able to set goals for yourself and achieve them. You can achieve. This makes you powerful! We will help you discover your strengths and build on them, understand your values, communicate with others effectively, set goals, make good decisions, and accept responsibility for how your decisions turn out." The schedule for the five sessions is as follows:

Monday	Self-esteem
Tuesday	Communications
Wednesday	Goal-setting
Thursday	Decision making
Friday	Assuming responsibility

Students who have completed the program have evaluated it and given it enthusiastic support. One student stated: "I feel the guidance course is a learning experience on knowing yourself and knowing how far you can get in life. I learned that being assertive is one of the keys to getting closer to your goals. I also learned that if I think positive, I'll reach my goal and feel good that I got there on my own. I feel that this course ought to be taught in regular schools."

An additional benefit to this undertaking has been that the staff has come together to define the mission of the school, expectations for student behavior, and approaches in dealing with problems. The Cypress staff knows that stating expectations the first week, in itself, is not enough to change behavior. However, the entire staff can work together systematically to reinforce subsequent appropriate student behavior. In so doing, the school can operate as a true therapeutic environment in which students can "try on" and be rewarded for new behaviors that they have been taught. The students' behaviors are more mature after the course than they were before. The students share a common vocabulary and understandings which will facilitate negotiation when problems arise

Replication:

This course can be adapted by individual teachers and incorporated into English, history–social science, or a core curriculum. The course outline could also be expanded with the incorporation of additional lessons and become a guidance course lasting for a full quarter or a semester.

MISSION SAN JOSE HIGH SCHOOL, FREMONT

Principal's Academic and Behavior Review Board

Program components:

- Identification and monitoring
- Systemic prevention of at-risk behavior together with intervention
- Principal's academic and behavior review board
- Improvement of the instructional program
- Inputs and outcomes

Target:

- All teachers

Costs:

- All costs are covered by the existing district budget. No additional expenditures are required.

Outcomes:

- For the past three years, a 95 percent attendance rate has been achieved through goal setting and consistent monitoring.
- The three-year average dropout rate is 1.7 percent.

For more information, contact:

Marcia Mathog, Vice Principal
Mission San Jose High School
41717 Palm Avenue
Fremont, CA 94539
(415) 657-3600

Program description:

Members of the faculty at Mission San Jose High School believe that by working together they can make a significant impact on the rate at which students are dropping out of school. Every administrator, teacher, and support staff person is involved in a schoolwide multiphased approach to reach students who may be at risk. The program has the following components:

- *Prevention and Intervention*

  At Mission San Jose High School, an administrator, counselor, and attendance clerk are assigned to each grade level and work together with the class for several years. This structure provides the students with continuity and stability and fosters trust between them and the staff. Additional key personnel include

specialized counselors for the GATE, ROP, and at-risk programs; a school psychologist; and a student study team.

- *Principal's Academic and Behavior Review Board*

  When other forms of intervention have not been effective and the student appears to be in danger of dropping out, the administrator convenes the Principal's Academic and Behavior Review Board. The review board brings together the parent, student, principal, counselor, grade-level administrator, and a representative of the Fremont Unified School District's Child Welfare and Attendance Office. The goal is to take whatever action is necessary to ensure that the student will graduate from high school. Activities aimed at achieving the goal include (1) forming a partnership between home, school, and the community to solve the problems which are causing the student to drop out; and (2) screening and developing individualized programs for at-risk students. The process works because it intervenes to change behavior, focuses on problems and solutions, monitors the at-risk student, and involves a cooperative effort. It serves in the same way that an individualized education plan does for the special education student.

- *Identification and Monitoring*

  Attendance problems, academic failure, and antisocial behaviors signal potential dropping out. The school has a program of strong administrative and counselor support in these areas.

  1. *Attendance*. For the past three years, Mission San Jose High School has targeted and achieved a 95 percent attendance rate through goal setting and consistent monitoring. These policies are implemented through the following activities:

     a. Clearing 90 percent of all absences within 24 hours

     b. Using an automated caller

     c. Utilizing computerized period-by-period attendance scanners and printouts that allow for hourly updates when needed

     d. Assigning an administrator to see the student and contact the parent for every unexcused absence

     e. Adopting a rule that ten excused absences per year are deemed excessive and contacting the parents

     f. Assigning counselors to monitor students with attendance problems

  2. *Academic progress*. Counselors and administrators closely monitor grades and progress toward graduation. The district's data-processing services are used maximally to provide information and facilitate home-school communications. Teachers can initiate student placement by alerting counselors. The counselors track academic progress and identify and recommend students to the student study team and review board process.

  3. *Antisocial behaviors*. At-risk behavior is characterized by poor decision-making capabilities. Students so affected tend to make friends who are in trouble and to be drawn toward tribalism and gang affiliation.

- *Improving the Instructional Program*

  The faculty is focusing on instructional strategies and a suitable learning environment. These areas have the greatest potential for immediate impact on at-risk students.

1. *Instructional strategies.* The entire staff has had training in elements of effective instruction and are incorporating advanced models of teaching into the instructional repertoire. These include concept formation, generative strategies, synectics, concept attainment, values clarification, and collaborative strategies. Teachers receive strong support for contacting students' homes frequently.
2. *Suitable learning environment.* A good teacher-student relationship generates a positive classroom climate. The school expects teachers to demonstrate a positive attitude as a model for appropriate student behavior.

Replication:

Overall, students have shown significant improvement in attendance, self-esteem, development, and motivation. The principal's academic and behavior review board can be adapted for use by any school principal and staff without any additional expense.

WALKER JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL, ANAHEIM

Improve the Instructional Program for At-Risk Youths

Program components:

- Sterling/Kohlberg Self-Diagnostic System of Discipline
- Computer programs and student-developed programs
- Integrated social science–English program
- Inputs and outcomes

Target:

- Middle school students

Costs:

- All costs are included in the budget for regular school and district operations.

Outcomes:

- The median increase in grade point average for at-risk students is 1.5 in core classes and .5 in all classes.
- Dropout data were unavailable for middle schools at the time of printing.
- The program has been rated by the National Council for Social Science Projects as the number one middle school project in the nation.

For more information, contact:

Elizabeth Jackman, Principal
Walker Junior High School
Post Office Box 3520
Anaheim, CA 92803-3520
(714) 999-3579

Program description:

Walker Junior High's core class is a program developed to assist at-risk students identified at the sixth-grade level as low achievers. According to their sixth-grade instructors, these students had academic potential but did not display it.

Two instructors team-teach this core class for more flexibility in scheduling and in instructional practices. In particular, the instructors wanted to use computer technology.

English and history are taught back-to-back as a core class, with a crossover of both curricula. Literature relates to time periods studied, and English skills are employed for all history papers. Computer technology and site-developed programs are used liberally inthe teaching of the curriculum. The class meets during the first two periods of the day to encourage the students' success and productivity in all areas of study. A student teacher is involved, and the teachers share the program with other new and experienced teachers.

The program features these additional components:

1. *Sterling/Kohlberg self-diagnostic system of discipline.* The students learn maturational levels of behavior. This knowledge helps them to make value judgments as they assume responsibility for modifying their classroom and school behavior. Conflicts and personal problems are resolved through the use of the system as students analyze their actions in light of identified values.
2. *Computer programs and student-developed programs.*The program and its curriculum were developed to take advantage of the high interest computers stimulate and their ability to direct a tremendous amount of knowledge toward the students. The students are taught to use and develop data bases to promote instruction, the retention of knowledge, educational abilities, and self-esteem.

Students who have gone through the program have demonstrated an unusual ability to modify their own classroom and school behavior. They resolve conflicts and personal problems through the use of the system as they analyze their actions and values. Classmates help each other stay on task by gently identifying negative behavior. The result of this cooperative work with the computer and with the Sterling/Kohlberg system is that students develop a new understanding of themselves and higher self-esteem.

Replication:

The contents of this course can be adapted by individual teachers and incorporated into English, history–social science, or other subjects. The computer programs developed by the instructors and by the students are available on disks.

APPENDIX

October 3, 1988

To: County Superintendents of Schools
District Superintendents
Project Directors
Selected Principals
Selected Teachers
Deans of Schools of Education

From: Harvey Hunt, Assistant Superintendent/Director
Intersegmental Relations Division
(916) 445-1703

Subject: The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) Grant Award Program Project STARS: Strategies for Teachers of At-Risk Students

Purpose of the Grants

The California State Department of Education is looking for successful teaching practices and approaches which new teachers can use to identify and work with students who are at risk of dropping out of school. In an effort to find the most successful and innovative ways of dealing with at risk students, grant awards will be offered to those schools, school districts, county offices of education, colleges, and universities submitting program descriptions selected for a publication titled *Strategies for Teachers of At-Risk Students*.

This publication will be distributed within California and will be made available to chief state school officers throughout the nation.

This program is made possible through support from the Mellon Foundation in cooperation with the Council of Chief State School Officers.

Background

In some California schools as many as 70 percent of the students are dropping out before they receive a diploma. Unfortunately, the number of at-risk students appears to be increasing as the rate of poverty in our cities grows and educational opportunities diminish. *Unfinished Business*, a report on the result of school reform from the Achievement Council, states that "almost one-half of Latino and black students leave school before graduating. Of those who do graduate, only about one in ten are eligible to enter four-year colleges, and only one in fifty obtains a degree."

The crisis in education is not limited to Latino and black students. The prospect for receiving a complete and high quality education are bleak for students from many different backgrounds. However, research tells us that for some students in similar circumstances, opportunities do exist that enable them to participate in viable educational programs which prepare them for success beyond high school. Schools can make a difference in the type of education our students receive. Again, from *Unfinished Business:* "Of the hundreds of people and events that shape our lives, those associated with schools are among the most powerful."

We believe that good teaching practices and approaches do make a significant difference in the lives of students. Every day, teachers throughout the state employ successful instructional strategies that increase the likelihood of students graduating from high school. It is more important than ever to make such successful teaching practices and approaches to learning known and available to others, especially teachers who are entering the profession for the first time.

Activities to Be Supported

A grant award of $250 will be made to selected applicants submitting a description of the successful practices and approaches which help new teachers to ensure students' graduation from high school. As a result of the implementation of these strategies, teachers should be better prepared to adapt instructional methods and select instructional materials to meet the needs of an increasingly heterogeneous group of students. The teaching practices and approaches described should apply especially to those teachers who are new to the profession but can be directed to teachers at any grade level from kindergarten and grades one through twelve.

The description of successful practices and approaches should address one or more of the following areas related to students who are at risk of dropping out of school:

- Recognizing students who are at risk
- Addressing the needs of individual students who are at risk
- Improving the quality of the instructional program on a schoolwide basis

Recognizing Students Who Are at Risk—Applicants may choose to address successful instructional practices and approaches which feature the early recognition of conditions which contribute to dropping out, such as: low scores on achievement tests; repeating a grade; being overage for a grade; infrequent participation in extracurricular activities; poor attendance; discipline problems; conflict with the demands of work; difficulty in getting along with the teacher; students who become pregnant and/or marry; and students with children.

Addressing the Needs of Individual Students—Teaching practices and approaches addressing the needs of individual students may include, but are not limited to: improving study habits; sharpening test-taking skills; problem solving; time management; tying core knowledge and skills to alternative learning; varying teaching styles to accommodate levels of learning, interest and ability; establishing student study teams; and collaborative learning.

Improving the Instructional Program—Ways in which new teachers can become familiar with and participate fully in the development and delivery of a high quality curriculum and improvement in the overall functioning of the school may also be considered. Components addressed in this area may include the development and delivery of a high-quality core curriculum which is appropriately challenging, interesting, and relevant to students who are at risk; increasing teacher skills and knowledge in instructional methodology; positively influencing teacher attitude and instructional bias toward students at risk; and encouraging parental monitoring of student progress.

Terms of the Grant

Grants of $250 will be awarded to those submitted program descriptions selected for publication in *Strategies for Teachers of At-Risk Students*. The grant may be used at the discretion of the applicant. In addition to the grant award, successful applicants will receive nationwide recognition of their successful teaching practices and approaches which support new teachers through distribution of *STARS* to school districts throughout the country.

The Selection Process

Approximately forty finalist will be selected by an advisory panel made up of representatives of the schools of education from colleges and universities, teacher organizations, and recognized experts

on students who are at-risk. Winning projects will be selected based on visits to the program sites. The site visits will be short, approximately one-half day in length. The main purpose of the visit is to view the program in action. Award winners will be announced after the beginning of the new year.

Procedure for Applying

Proposals are to be submitted by school districts on behalf of one school, a cluster of schools, or for projects to be carried out districtwide.

Proposals may be submitted by county offices of education on behalf of a consortium of school districts wishing to apply jointly.

Proposals are to be limited to five or fewer pages, not including a cover page. The cover page and the body of the proposal should contain the following:

The Cover Page

1. Name of the school district and school(s) involved in the program. The name of the county office should be included, if applicable.
2. Name of the person to contact for further information.
3. The target group for the program. Example: Newly hired teachers of middle grade students.
4. The expected outcomes for students. What concern(s) does the project address? Please see page 2 of this Request for Proposal for suggested areas of focus.
5. The expected outcomes for teachers.What skills and knowledge do teachers gain?
6. The significant features (no more than three) that characterize the program.
7. Costs, if any, associated with the program, and funding sources.

The Program Description

The program description is a summary of the significant features of your project. The teaching practices and approaches you select to convey should impart the quality and creativity of an instructional program which has influenced your new teachers as they work with at-risk students. It should be clear from your description which of the three areas of concentration you are addressing:

Recognizing students who are at risk
Addressing the needs of individual students
Improving the instructional program

Please limit this portion of your proposal to four pages. All essential information should be contained in the proposal itself, as supporting documents cannot be included in the final publication.

Where to Send Your Proposal

Please send five copies of your proposal to:

Margaret Gaston
Office of Intersegmental Relations
721 Capitol Mall, Room 639
Sacramento, CA 94244-2720

Proposals should be postmarked no later than November 28, 1988. If you have further questions, please call Margaret Gaston at (408) 427-3521.

NOTES

[1] Merchant, p. 2.
[2] Peterson, 25.
[3] Slavin, 111.
[4] Slavin, Robert and Nancy, 11.
[5] Boyer, p. 95.
[6] Honig, quoted in Kirst, p. 99.
[7] Gandara, 41.
[8] Levin, *Educational Leadership* (1987), 19.
[9] Ibid
[10] Kirst, p. 90.
[11] Graham, p. 167.
[12] Dunn, et al., 56.
[13] Sherwood, p. 14.
[14] Graham, p. 171.
[15] Fine, p. 107.
[17] Fenwick, p. 67.
[18] Sadker, et al., 47.
[19] Robert Calfee, in Kirst, p. 99.
[20] Honig, in Kirst, p. 100.
[21] Fine, p. 94.
[22] Levin, *Teacher Education Quarterly* (1974), 74.
[23] Casanova, 47.

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